



Health and Welfare
Canada

Santé et Bien-être social
Canada

Health Services
and Promotion
Branch

Direction générale
des services et de la
promotion de la santé

Mental Health Division
Room 658
Jeanne Mance Building
Tunney's Pasture

APR
AVR 5 1991

Mr. David Walker, M.P.
Winnipeg North Centre
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Walker:

Thank you for your letter of March 12, 1991, concerning environmental sensitivities and a specific program in place to alert the medical profession and provincial health care officials to its symptoms. Concerns in this area have been brought to the attention of various programs in Health and Welfare Canada.

As you are aware, the Department of National Health and Welfare held a workshop on the issue. The two main purposes of that workshop were: to identify and develop priorities for multidisciplinary research into the condition; and to identify educational/health promotion needs and explore social problems of affected persons. Workshop participants included a number of representatives of Health and Welfare Canada, medical experts, health researchers and representatives of the Allergy Information Association, the Canadian Society of Environmental Medicine, the Canadian Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology, the Canadian Public Health Association and the Canadian Medical Association.

Information presented at the workshop and in related literature suggests that there are many people who are unusually sensitive to chemicals and other substances in the environment and that some may be quite ill. There is also agreement that this is a problem that needs careful scientific assessment. The "syndrome" requires that a definition be undertaken by epidemiological experts with clinical and basic science input.

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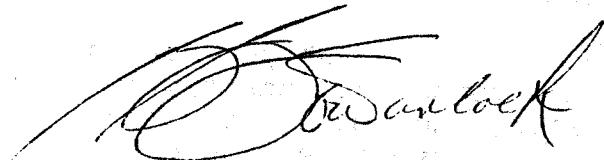
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A recommendation arising from the sub-group on laboratory approaches at the workshop suggested the evaluation of a patient include a questionnaire, physical examination and clinical laboratory testing. Various testing procedures were suggested at this meeting. However, the lack of readily available routine diagnostic tests and the controversial nature of some of these tests does make diagnosis difficult.

The proceedings of the Health and Welfare workshop are expected in the very near future and we will be happy to send you a copy as soon as it is available. In the anticipated wide dissemination of the document, all medical faculties in Canadian universities will be included. We are also bringing this issue forward to the next Federal-Provincial Advisory Committee on Mental Health for information.

Thank you for your interest in this matter. I hope this information is useful to you.

Yours truly,



Gweneth Gowanlock
Director